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ARRIVAL OF THE PILGRIMS

By  
JOHN FRANKLIN JAMESON, PH.D., LL.D., LITT.D.



A LECTURE  
DELIVERED AT BROWN UNIVERSITY, PROVIDENCE R. I.  
NOVEMBER 21, 1920

PRINTED BY THE UNIVERSITY







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ARRIVAL OF THE PILGRIMS

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## THE ARRIVAL OF THE PILGRIMS

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ON a Saturday afternoon in November, 1620, on a day that would now be called the twenty-first, a small ship, of one hundred and eighty tons in the reckoning of that time, sailed into the bleak harbor at the extremity of Cape Cod. Today, three hundred years later, at the suggestion of the President of the United States, the event is being commemorated in thousands of American towns and villages. Last summer the initial stages of the same voyage were commemorated with impressive ceremonies by the Dutch at Leyden and Rotterdam and by the English at Southampton and Plymouth. We may well ask the question, and indeed it is the purpose for which we have come together this evening, to ask the question, and if we can to answer it, Why should this event be celebrated so extensively and with so much emphasis at the end of three hundred years?

May I say for myself and for my own simple part in the services this evening that I respond always with great pleasure to every invitation to return to Providence, where during thirteen years it was my happy privilege to teach, where I formed lifelong connections with the best of friends, and where every kindness was constantly bestowed upon me.

I also think it proper to say, that I responded to the invitation of President Faunce with greater alacrity because it was based upon a general sugges-

tion made by the President of the United States, that this day should be thus commemorated. To me the suggestion or request comes not only as an official call, but as one strengthened by personal feeling and rooted in old remembrances of my first years in Brown University and of years at the Johns Hopkins University before that. My mind goes back to days now thirty years in the past, but which some of you will well remember, when the Brown University Lecture Association was organized, primarily for the purpose of having lectures in history and political science delivered to members and friends of the University in Manning Hall, and when the most attractive of its lectures were a series on municipal government given by a young professor, of brilliant speech and engaging manners, who from time to time came over for the purpose from Wesleyan University at Middletown. Many were then impressed with his political sagacity as well as with his gifts of exposition, though none, I am sure, of those who met him on these occasions, nor I myself, had any notion of the remarkable career that lay before him. He was my warm friend in those earlier days, and though I have naturally made no attempt to seek intimacy with him during his years in Washington, and am well aware that these years have been checkered with mistakes and marred by the operation of one great defect, I can not fail to regard with deep feeling whatever is said by him from that high office. I can not fail to regard as



invested with special force a request to commemorate the Pilgrims, that comes from one who has shown himself so great a master of American history, and who, Southern born and Southern bred, has never failed to show in his writings acute perception and high appreciation of the work of Pilgrim and Puritan. I can not fail to remember the exaltation and devoted feeling with which he has conceived of himself as the continuator of the Pilgrims' work into the wider sphere of political activity into which the opening vistas of the twentieth century permit us to look. Here in this university, where I always thought it the main duty of a professor of history to preach fairness and openness of mind, I of course try to look at his career with serenity and detachment, to see his record as it is, with all its blemishes. But as I think of him, prematurely old, stricken, disappointed yet undismayed, ending a memorable administration in obloquy and with the appearance, temporary or permanent, of tragic failure, I cannot but think of the words with which Milton, in the second sonnet to Cyriack Skinner, speaks of the loss of his eyes:

Yet I argue not  
 Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot  
 Of heart or hope; but still bear up and steer  
 Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask?  
 The conscience, friend, to have lost them overplied  
 In liberty's defense, my noble task,  
 Of which all Europe rings from side to side.

But to ask again our question: Why do we celebrate the arrival of that little ship, three hundred years ago, in that lonely harbor? Not, surely, because the event in itself was brilliant or imposing. Bearing its crowded company of one hundred or one hundred and two passengers the little ship came to an anchor on that Saturday afternoon. On the next day they kept the Sabbath. On the Monday some of the men went ashore and did a little exploring. The eighteen wives, or such of them as were able to stand and walk, also went ashore, and did their family washing. Eighteen wives, of whom by the ensuing April only four were still living! Contrast all this with some of the Spanish landings to the southward—of Cortez, or Pizarro, or de Soto, when formidable bodies of Spanish infantry, with cavalry and artillery, came ashore, unfurled with imposing ceremony the royal standard of Castile and Leon, or the imperial flag of Charles the Fifth, and listened to the reading of pompous proclamations of their high master,

“All the while  
Sonorous metal blowing martial sounds.”

It may be that there is something impressive, as certainly there is something pathetic, in the spectacle of those eighteen brave women proceeding with housewifely rigor to that humble Monday duty to which tomorrow eighteen million American women will address themselves with the like faith-

ful ardor, and carrying it through in the chilly air of late November (some of them doubtless getting their death-colds in the process), but it does not make a brilliant or picturesque scene.

Neither do we celebrate the day because the settlement which these devoted men and women came to found attained great physical dimensions, so that their colony became itself, as did the Massachusetts colony, one of the great political entities of this world. It had a brief career of seventy years, and when it was absorbed into its more powerful neighbor, it had not above thirteen thousand inhabitants; nor is the area which it covered, to this day, one of the most important or influential portions of our great republic.

Neither do we celebrate the day because the little band of exiles who then came for the first time into an American harbor, or, in the case of the strongest, set foot for the first time on American soil, were themselves great or brilliant or important personages. A dozen of the men were members of the English middle class, men with some education and some property, substantial yeomen or small merchants but nothing more, and the rest were of even humbler standing, in an age when standing counted far more, far more severely limited men's careers, than it does now.

Here, however, if I may digress for a moment, I should like to draw attention to one aspect of their worldly condition to which I think too little attention

has perhaps been given by most of those who have considered their story. I do not think it is customary to give due weight to the fact that most of them had lived for a dozen years in Holland. Those who had migrated to Amsterdam in 1608 and Leyden in 1609, had in England been for the most part dwellers in rural villages or small towns. Not a few of those who hear me may have visited the ancient hamlets of Scrooby and Austerfield from which, or the vicinity of which, a considerable number of them are known to have come. Pleasing villages they are, and must have been in the days of the migration. The little church at Austerfield, in which William Bradford was baptised, is a venerable and beautiful monument of antiquity, coming down in part from the eleventh or twelfth century, and so is the somewhat larger church of Scrooby, almost equally old. They are well adapted to bestow on village minds such enlightenment as comes from old religion, hallowed associations, and long continued peace. The quiet scenery of that somewhat tame portion of the English countryside had also other value and other inspiration. But life in these villages, or the life of humble artisans in Gainsborough or Boston or Lincoln in the early part of the seventeenth century, was certainly sluggish and contracted and parochial. To migrate from that environment to the two great cities of Holland, and to dwell in the most intellectual of these for a dozen years, close by a university that was already the most famous Protestant

university in Europe, would surely have its effect in awakening the Pilgrim mind to wider and more active thought and to more tolerant as well as more ingenious habits of mind.

The Pilgrims themselves were not unaware of some of the mental effects of the transition. Says Bradford:

"Being now come into the Low Countries, they saw many goodly and fortified cities, strongly walled and garded with tropes of armed men. Also they heard a strange and uncouth language, and beheld the differente manners and custumes of the people, with their strange fashions and attires; all so farre differing from that of their plaine countrie villages (wherin they were bred, and had so long lived) as it seemed they were come into a new world. But these were not the things they much looked on, or long tooke up their thoughts; for they had other work in hand, and an other kind of warr to wage and maintaine. For though they saw faire and bewtifull cities, flowing with abundance of all sorts of welth and riches, yet it was not longe before they saw the grimme and grisly face of povertie coming upon them like an armed man, with whom they must bukle and incounter, and from whom they could not flye; but they were armed with faith and patience against him, and all his encounters; and though they were sometimes foyled, yet by Gods assistance they prevailed and got the victorie."

I do not think that the relative positions of Eng-

land and the Netherlands in 1609 are rightly understood by most of those who read about the Pilgrims. In 1609, and still more in 1620, Holland, at any rate, the chief and most advanced of the Dutch provinces, was in several respects considerably more advanced intellectually and in point of general civilization than England, Amsterdam rather more the center of the world's enlightenment than London, and certainly the University of Leyden superior to those of Oxford and Cambridge. Quite apart from that transition from the life of small rural villages to that of busy and enterprising cities upon the effects of which Bradford comments, it may be maintained with a good deal of force that migration from England to Holland at just that time was migration from a less civilized to a more civilized country. The Netherlands had a smaller population than England, and they were less rich in natural resources, but during the forty years through which they had been conducting against Spain their war of independence, they had progressed enormously. The very fact of independence had given them wider horizons and new energy. The conduct of their political and economic affairs had been in the hands of city-dwellers, of commercial magnates, with urban minds and that wide knowledge of the world which commerce brings. Their commerce had increased by leaps and bounds. Their great East India Company and their other trading organizations had already in 1609 begun to flood the country

with wealth. Art and letters were already beginning to take on that brilliant development that made the years of Prince Frederick Henry the Golden Age of Dutch history. Moreover, the very years which the Pilgrims spent in Leyden were the twelve years of truce with Spain, during which the advancement of Holland proceeded at a rate exceptionally rapid, so that whatever advantages she had in the comparison in 1609 were heightened in 1620, and the Pilgrims during their sojourn were witnesses of an economic progress and of a social advance such as has seldom been seen in twelve years of the history of any small nation. From all quarters of Europe, too, merchants and travellers were constantly bringing fresh varieties of intelligence, whose influence even humble English artisans in Leyden, or, at any rate, their leaders, could not escape. Most important of all, the province of Holland was far in advance of other states of the world in respect to the tolerance of all varieties of religious opinion. Jewish exiles from Spain and Portugal, orthodox like those who filled the richest of the world's synagogues (that of Amsterdam), or heretical like Benedict Spinoza, Socinians from Transylvania or Poland, Greeks and Russians, Catholics and every variety of Protestant, found here a hospitable home and an undisturbed opportunity to think and to discourse. The superior tolerance which always marked the Plymouth Colony in contrast to that of Massachusetts Bay cannot have been due solely to the mild and gentle

character which Brewster and Bradford impressed upon their settlement at its foundation. In large measure it must have been due to the beneficent operation upon Pilgrim minds of the intelligent tolerance which they had seen to prevail under the government of the Dutch magistrates, and from which they themselves had profited so largely.

Amsterdam in those days was smaller indeed than London, with a population of perhaps 100,000 in comparison with perhaps 250,000 in the English capital; but it was in just those years a city of more enterprise and energy than London, expanding with extraordinary rapidity, and reaching out through commercial channels into all quarters of the globe.

Leyden, on the other hand, was the chief manufacturing town of Holland. Its population in these years was about 60,000. Thus it was much smaller than London; but very few of the Pilgrims had ever lived in London, and Leyden was perhaps three times as large as any other English city or town. The manufacture of cloth was its leading industry, and most of the Pilgrims, tillers of the soil hitherto, turned their hands to the work of weaving. Hand-weavers, it is known, are prone to think, and in the atmosphere of Leyden there was much to stimulate the intellect. A stone's throw from the social center of the Separatist congregation—the house of their pastor, John Robinson—stood the chief hall of the University of Leyden, which in the 350 years of its



existence has probably maintained a higher average level of eminence in its professors than any other of the old universities of Europe. Justus Lipsius and Joseph Scaliger, most learned of all men, had taught there just before the Pilgrims' time. Daniel Heinsius and Jacob Arminius were teaching there in their day. We know that Robinson attended the lectures of Arminius, and took part, modestly but effectively, in the debates which raged around that celebrated theologian. It is certain that not only Robinson, but Elder Brewster, who occupied himself with the printing of books, and those who assisted in his printing-house, and especially William Bradford, with his well-trained and open mind, always eager for fuller and better knowledge, must have profited largely by the neighborhood of these brilliant intellectual influences. It is almost equally certain that those influences filtered among the rank and file of the congregation, those humble artisans of whose pleasant and close relations with the people of the city Bradford gives us so agreeable a picture.

"So," says Bradford, "they lefte the goodly and pleasante citie, which had been ther resting place near 12 years; but they knew they were pilgrimes, and looked not much on those things, but lift up their eyes to the heavens, their dearest cuntrie, and quieted their spirits."

Some writers have made much larger claims of Dutch influence upon the Pilgrim mind, and through it, upon all America. There have been a few who

have even gone so far as to declare with great emphasis that our federal system and our habit of the written constitution, since the English did not have them, must have come to us from the Dutch. It is true that the seven Dutch provinces in 1620 were a confederation, and that that confederation had a written constitution. But surely there is a natural history of federal governments, wherein we see the operation of similar causes producing similar results, without the need of resorting to the hypothesis of imitation. Public men are but little accustomed, unless in some great hurry, to adopt the institutions of another country, but much more likely to seek for expedients that will meet the exigencies which immediately confront them and satisfy the people who have appointed them to legislate. Federal governments come into existence because states or communities hitherto independent feel the need of union, for the sake of greater security or power, but are not yet ready to merge their individuality in that of a unitary state. Because the Australian colonies have come together in a federal commonwealth, shall we conclude that they must have been at some time subjected to powerful Dutch or Swiss influences of which we have not heard before? And as to the written constitution, can we imagine states coming together to form a union and not setting down in writing the terms of their agreement?

Somewhat more of a case may be made out for Dutch influence in the formation of the New Eng-

land Confederation of 1643, by which the colonies of Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, Connecticut, and New Haven united for common defence against the Dutch of New Netherland, the French, and the Indians. The prime fact of confederation is seen to have been due to causes obvious enough and which require no supposition of Dutch influence upon the movement in general; and Plymouth, which had had the greatest amount of contact with the Dutch, was the least influential of the four confederates. Some features of the plan, however, may easily be held to show the influence of Dutch models, and there are some portions of the early New England legislation which show that some of the excellencies of the Dutch legal system had not escaped the attention of our early law-makers. But in the main we are to seek the traces of Dutch influence upon the Plymouth mind in a greater mildness and tolerance than was customary among the English, and a greater degree of general intelligence than would be expected, in that age, of peasants who had never strayed far from villages of the English countryside.

A long digression, but it may have helped us to understand better the company of forty-one men and eighteen women that sailed into harbor upon the *Mayflower* that Saturday afternoon in November, 1620, and to appreciate more rightly the nature of the action which those men took that day and which makes it memorable. For, to answer our question, we celebrate the day primarily because it

is the three hundredth anniversary of the Mayflower Compact. The day which has been most commonly celebrated in memory of the Pilgrims is the twenty-first of December, as being the day on which their vanguard made its famous landing at Plymouth, but that is perhaps because the habit of observing the day began at Plymouth (in 1769), and to those who instituted the observance there it was natural to commemorate first of all the arrival of the Pilgrims at their ultimate home. The great event, however, the one most invested with significance for the future, was that which took place in Provincetown harbor. Gathering together, presumably in the cabin of the *Mayflower*, they set their hands to what Bradford calls "a combination made by them before they came ashore, being the first foundation of their governmente in this place." It is fitting to repeat the old and familiar text:

"In the name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyall subjects of our dread soveraigne Lord, King James, by the grace of God, of Great Britaine, Franc, and Ireland king, defender of the faith, etc., haveing undertaken, for the glorie of God, and advancemente of the Christian faith, and honour of our king and countrie, a voyage to plant the first colonie in the Northerne parts of Virginia, doe by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God, and one of another, covenant and combine our selves together into a civill body politick, for our better ordering and preservation

and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by vertue hearof to enacte, constitute, and frame shuch just and equall lawes, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meete and convenient for the generall good of the Colonie, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witnes wherof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cap-Codd the 11. of November, in the year of the raigne of our soveraigne lord, King James, of England, France, and Ireland the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fiftie fourth. Anno Dom. 1620."

The origin of this agreement is explained by their chronicler. He says that it was occasioned partly by the discontented and mutinous speeches that some of the strangers amongst them had let fall in the ship, that when they came ashore they would use their own liberty, for none had power to command them, because the patent they had was for Virginia and not for New England, with which the Virginia Company had nothing to do; and partly that their act of agreement might be as firm as any patent, and in some respects more sure.

The meaning of this is, that before their departure from Holland the Pilgrim Company had obtained a patent from the Virginia Company, but now, evidently, were about to settle outside the limits of its jurisdiction. The organization commonly called the Virginia Company had under its charter the right to form settlements and exercise jurisdiction any-

where on the American coast between thirty-five and forty-one degrees north latitude. In 1619 and 1620 the company was much disposed to encourage the formation of what they called "particular plantations," settlements which enterprising individuals, or groups of individuals having a certain unity, agreed to form and maintain at their own expense as organisms subordinate to the chief colonial organization that centered in Jamestown. Several plantations in Virginia had this subordinate character and maintained it for some years. To encourage such increase of population to their thinly settled province, the Virginia Company was well content to recognize in such bodies a certain independence of its regulations and a certain freedom of action. In the Division of Manuscripts in the Library of Congress are preserved, as one of its most treasured possessions, two volumes of the records of the Virginia Company's meetings in these very years from 1619 to 1624. In the record of a meeting in February, 1620, we read, "It was ordered also by generall Consent that such Captaines or leaders of Particulerr Plantations that shall goe there to inhabite by vertue of their Grants and Plant themselves, their Tennantes and Servantes in Virginia, shall have liberty till a forme of Government be here settled for them, Associating unto them divers of the gravest and discreetes of their Companies, to make Orders, Ordinances and Constitutions, for the better orderinge and dyrectinge

of their Servants and buisines Provided they be not Repugnant to the Lawes of England." Now this order was passed on the very day that the patent to John Pierce and his associates for Plymouth was "allowed and Sealed in vиеw of the Courte with a Total approbation."

If the Pilgrims had been able to act under such a patent as this, the patent they brought out with them for instance, they would have been possessed of certain powers of framing rules or orders for their own government, certain powers, that is, of local legislation. If authority derived from the Virginia Company could not be recognized as valid in forty-two degrees of north latitude, it was natural to substitute for it an authority as closely analogous as possible, and one sufficient for the purposes, authority derived from the common consent of colonists, who, if unable to consider themselves under the jurisdiction of the Virginia Company as they had planned, must then consider themselves as authorized to act in a similar manner under the direct authority of their dread sovereign lord, the king of Great Britain.

That a form of government such as they here instituted was contemplated before they left Holland, is plain from a passage which we find in the final letter of advice which their pastor wrote to the whole company at the time of their departure, and which was carried with them from Delfthaven and read to the assembled colonists at Southampton. Among the many advantages which the Pilgrims

had enjoyed at Leyden, some of which have already been mentioned, not the least, perhaps the greatest, was in the possession of so wise and beautiful a spirit as that of John Robinson; for, says Bradford, "besides his singular abilities in divine things (wherein he excelled) he was also very able to give directions in civil affairs, and to foresee dangers and inconveniences; by which means he was very helpful to their outward estates, and was in every way as a common father unto them." Nowhere are his foresight and his wisdom better shown than in that passage of the parting letter read at Southampton which relates to matters of government. It runs as follows:

"Lastly, wheras you are become a body politik, using amongst your selves civill goverments, and are not furnished with any persons of spetiall emincie above the rest, to be chosen by you into office of government, let your wisdom and godlines appeare, not only in chusing shuch persons as doe entirely love and will promote the commone good, but also in yeelding unto them all due honour and obedience in their lawfull administrations; not behoulding in them the ordinarinesse of their persons, but Gods ordinance for your good, not being like the foolish multitud who more honour the gay coate, than either the vertuous minde of the man, or glorious ordinance of the Lord. But you know better things, and that the image of the Lords power and authoritie which the magistrate beareth,



is honourable, in how meane persons soever. And this dutie you both may the more willingly and ought the more conscionably to performe, because you are at least for the present to have only them for your ordinarie governours, which your selves shall make choyse of for that worke."

The nature of the Mayflower Compact has often been misjudged. It has sometimes been spoken of as if it established in America an independent republic, and this in spite of the plain acknowledgment of subjection to the king of Great Britain with which the document opens. In reality it was a temporary measure, adopted in order to take the place of a patent whose usefulness was at an end, and perhaps in strictness serving only until the arrival of the *Fortune* a year later, bringing a patent from the Council for New England differing mainly from the first and discarded patent in its territorial grant. From the date of the arrival of that second patent, the settlers of Plymouth found in it clear authority for the scheme of government which they had already adopted. It grants in terms the authority "by the consent of the greater part of them to establish such laws and ordinances as are for their better government, and the same, by such officer or officers as they shall by most voice elect and choose, to put in execution." The same provision is found in the patent granted to Cushman and Winslow in January, 1623, for the settlement at Cape Ann, and also in the colony patent of 1629, granted by the

Council for New England to William Bradford and his associates.

It is true that such an agreement, made under such circumstances, would actually bring into existence a polity different in fact from that which had hitherto been usual in attempts, even English attempts, to establish colonies in America. The usual method, in those times, in instituting government for any place outlying from England, was to entrust the control of affairs to those members of the body whose personal status, whose condition in life, marked them out as beings of a superior order, to whom the right of ruling belonged by the decree of heaven. The English world and every portion of it was to be ruled by noblemen and gentlemen; others were called upon simply to obey their betters and to do their duty in that station to which it had pleased God to call them. But Robinson foresaw and the fact was, that the actual composition of their company, lacking the bright presence of noblemen and gentlemen and unprovided with rulers appointed by the gracious hand of their monarch, would naturally lead them into a polity in which the right to rule was not conferred by previous status, might be lodged in persons of little worldly eminence, but was to be exercised by ordinary men whom ordinary men designated for the purpose and who were to be duly respected for that very reason.

In a sense, this temporary government, with its

power to make regulations by common consent, was like that which royal charters conferred upon English municipalities, wherein townsmen, authorized by their charter so to do, made by-laws for their own government and elected officers who were commissioned to enforce them—all under the authority of the British crown. Higher than any powers derived from letters patent, or even from the charter of a colonizing company, was the right of an English subject. "Go where he would, so long as he settled on land claimed by England and acknowledged allegiance to the English crown, the Englishman carried with him as much of the common law of England as was applicable to his station and was not repugnant to his other rights and privileges." The colonist in Virginia and in New Plymouth was guaranteed the possession and enjoyment of all the liberties, franchises, and immunities that he would have had if he had been born in England itself and had continued to dwell there, with the exception, of course, of those which his very distance forbade him to exercise.

But though the Mayflower Compact was a temporary device, and government under it alone continued but a year, the event of its signing is nevertheless of the greatest significance and highly worthy of commemoration. To appreciate what it meant, let us take a glance at the world of 1620 in the light of the years that have succeeded. The civilized world of 1620 was Europe. Through toil and

trouble lasting through centuries, European mankind had learned how to abide under orderly government, how to remain at peace most of the time, how to go on year after year, in city and town and village, maintaining the industries and intercourse of civilized life with that fair measure of law-abiding spirit and respect for the rights of others that enables men to prosper, to make at least a living, to dwell in a sense of security, and to give a chance to those forces that make for the improvement of men and communities. But that which lay before the future was the problem of expanding this orderly civilization to the filling of the other great divisions of the world, of America especially and of Africa. It is not too much to say that the chief matter of the three centuries that have since elapsed has been the building up of civilized life in America. I remember that I quoted six years ago in this place a passage from Darwin in which, with that quiet deliberation which gave to his utterances so much of their weight, he said of the essential process in our history, "Looking to the distant future, I do not think that the Rev. Mr. Zincke takes an exaggerated view when he says, 'All other series of events—as that which resulted in the culture of mind in Greece, and that which resulted in the Empire of Rome—only appear to have purpose and value when viewed in connection with, or rather as subsidiary to'. . . the great stream of Anglo-Saxon emigration to the west."

We have here in the United States, and the last few years have made it plain to all mankind, the greatest power the world has ever seen, an aggregation of civilized humanity more important, destined to fill a larger place in history, than the Roman Empire which for more than a thousand years so dominated the minds of men. To the north of us lies a great nation, which is kin to our own and in some respects of orderly submission to self-government surpasses us. Great areas to the southward are filled with republics which less perfectly maintain the ideals of self-government indeed, but which after all, by the influence of those ideals and the pervading sense of common origin, a common religion and language, and a common relation to the civilization of the Spanish peninsula, are preserved in a general state of peace as impressive and almost as complete as the famous Pax Romana, and brightened with hopes of progress which the Roman Empire never acquired.

If from the standpoint of 1620 we could look forward into the three centuries which since have passed, could see that the main movement of the future would be the occupation of the waste places of the earth, in North America, South America, and Africa, should we not perceive, with trembling apprehension, that all the hope of the future depended upon the question whether the European man could stand the strain of so great a transition? Much of his acquiescence in settled order obviously

depended upon the conservative inertia of one who dwells where his fathers dwelt and who has no other institutions than those which have grown up around him in a fixed locality. Could he go forth in masses into the new world and spread over its numerous unoccupied areas, and still retain most of what was valuable in the civilization he had acquired?

The very intelligent counsellors who surrounded the King of Spain foresaw this problem in no small degree, and attempted to solve it in a manner according to their prepossessions. To them it seemed indispensable that Spaniards coming to America, to whatever remote part of it, should not escape from the long arm of the law. They regulated their new world from Madrid and from Seville with minute care and abundant and often wise legislation. They provided administrative machinery marked by much ingenuity, sent out many well-qualified officials, and devised still further machinery for bringing to book those whom they had sent out to administer what they had decreed. It was not all in vain. Spanish administration was far from being a failure. Much in it was excellent, and much that we find defective in the government and procedure of Spanish America of today is in larger degree the effect of predominating Indian blood than of whatever weaknesses there were in the Spanish administrative system.

Nevertheless there was a better way by which the

great problem, as momentous as any problem that has lain before the human mind, might be solved. No one would now doubt that the problem of the government of very remote communities is best solved if those communities can be made able and willing to govern themselves. To the Spaniards, the Portuguese, the French, and the Dutch of 1620 such a proposal would have seemed unnatural. Their colonies were to be governed by qualified persons whom they sent out to govern, and in the absence of such important representatives of European authority their colonial communities were usually helpless. But there was something in the Anglo-Saxon, however or whensoever acquired, that enabled him, and has almost always enabled him, to rise to such situations. The Mayflower Compact was but the first of a long line of instances in which that ability to supply the lack of external authority by the assumption of self-government has shown itself. Everyone here present knows how in 1636, when Roger Williams and his associates were establishing the town of Providence on territory which seemed to lie outside the jurisdiction of any constituted authority, they framed and signed a similar agreement, influenced possibly by Williams's residence in Plymouth, but naturally evoked by the circumstances in which he and his companions found themselves. Its text may be compared with that of the compact signed in the cabin of the *Mayflower* sixteen years before.

"We whose names are hereunder written, being

desirous to inhabit in the town of Providence, do promise to submit ourselves, in active or passive obedience, to all such orders or agreements as shall be made for public good of the body, in an orderly way, by the major consent of the present inhabitants, masters of families incorporated together into a township, and such others as they shall admit into the same—only in civil things.”

Very likely the form of such compacts is in some degree derived from that of the church covenants into which Separatist congregations of that day were accustomed to enter. Possibly there may have been some influence from the form of the so-called “associations,” or signed agreements to persevere in a given course of political action, which, in the days before the rise of political parties, had done service on several occasions in English and Scottish history, beginning in England with the Association of 1584, the agreement to oppose and pursue all those who should seek to compass the death of Queen Elizabeth. But the real cause of the framing of such documents was that men of the English race found themselves outside the jurisdiction of constituted authorities, yet, through long habituation to local self-government or to other incidents of settled order in English villages, found it intolerable to be without definite basis for government, and improvised one by common action to take the place of what in those days would more normally have been supplied by the crown, as it had been in the case of James-



town. Several other agreements of the sort, plantation covenants as they were sometimes called, like that which bound together the settlers at Hampton, New Hampshire, may be found in the early annals of our colonies. At a later period, in the days of the Revolution and later, settlers in Vermont or Kentucky or the Northwest Territory, when they found themselves outside the range of state governments or on land so much in dispute that no state could exercise a recognized authority, formed similar temporary compacts for the government of their own affairs. Later, beyond the Mississippi, claim associations of squatters, communities of miners in valleys inaccessible to the arm of the law, Americans who had gone outside the ascertained boundaries of the United States yet deemed themselves to be still within its protection, have framed similar compacts, by which they have agreed to abide by the decision of the majority and to obey the laws and the magistrates which they themselves have made. The American does multitudes of things by voluntary association or informal agreement which the European expects to see done by governmental regulation or on governmental initiative. By the opening years of the twentieth century we have arrived at a period when even college students govern themselves, nay more, when even small boys, *ferae naturae*, govern themselves admirably in organizations of Boy Scouts, and solemnly administer a justice little tempered by mercy—nay, most

remarkable of all, when, without compulsion of law or executive order, upon the mere request of a government bureau, nearly every American, for several Sundays, voluntarily deprived himself of the use of gasoline in automobiles, repressing for the common good what is now apparently the chiefest passion of mankind.

Do not understand me to hold that because the Mayflower Compact was the first of a long series of voluntary agreements for self-government it is therefore entitled to such fame and celebration as if it had been the cause of all those that followed. An exaggerated importance has often been attached in American history to the first time that this or that thing was done. The agreement signed in Provincetown Harbor was in a sense casual, as being due to circumstances that had unexpectedly arisen. If the Pilgrims had landed where they had expected to land, there is no reason to suppose that their form of government would have been essentially different, or that they would have been governed otherwise than by laws of their own making, administered by officers of their own choosing. For this we have evidence from their patent and from Robinson's letter. It may be that in a strict legal sense government under the Compact lasted little more than a year. Nor can we think that their agreement stood in a causal relation to all the acts of voluntary association that followed in that age and in subsequent times. But when we reflect upon the enormous

importance which has attached, in subsequent American history and in that of the rest of the world, to the principle of self-government, of government based on the consent of the governed, of "government of the people, by the people, for the people," we shall surely think it not only warrantable but imperative that we should celebrate with grateful remembrance the action of those who first established such government on American soil.

We have met, then, to celebrate the slight beginnings of American self-government, the first manifestation in the New World of that spirit of voluntary association, of self-rule, of submission to the majority, of democracy, that has since made the conquest of the continent. Where forty-one sturdy Englishmen subscribed their adherence to these principles in 1620, in 1920 they are the accepted doctrine of a hundred and fifty millions or more in America and of a still greater number in Europe. Democracy at last prevails throughout the world.

In our gratulation over its advances, we must not lose sight of the imperfection with which its principles are carried out. Much of our adherence to those principles is lip-service. Rule by the consent of the governed, we sadly admit, is far from having achieved perfection, either as regards legislation or as regards execution. Neither can we yet pride ourselves on that whole-hearted submission to the rule of the majority which the theory of democracy requires. And of course we have to admit that

democracy at its best has faults from which some of the rival forms of government are more free. But on the whole it is clear to us that the government of plain men by plain men, or, to put it better, the government of men by their own wills, in the light of what their own minds conceive to be for their own joint interests, brings juster and happier results in the long run than any other polity. So we rejoice in the triumph of democracy and celebrate with fervent gratitude the day of its beginning in America.

The President, with his habitual discernment in historical matters, has rightly seen that, in the whole story of the arrival of the Pilgrims, it is the signing of the Mayflower Compact rather than any landing on Plymouth Rock, that most calls for commemoration three hundred years after, and President Faunce in asking me to come here and speak has rightly indicated that the beginnings of American self-government are likely to be the main theme of such a discourse. Yet, for my own part, I think I might be quite as much disposed to emphasize and commemorate the moral as the political quality of the Pilgrims' advent. The best institutions that ever were devised will work to good results only when sustained by character. Now just as when we look about us upon the founders of other republics—Mirabeau and Bolívar, let us say, and Gambetta and Lenin—we are filled with gratitude that at the forefront of our national history there stands the incomparable figure of Washington, as a model of

unselfish patriotism, of balanced wisdom, and of every public virtue, so it has been of incalculable benefit that we have always seen, at the threshold of our colonial history, such examples of civic virtue, of devotion to ideals, of willingness to make sacrifices for the common good, of fortitude, of gentle forbearance, and above all, of faith in the future and in God's providence, as are shown to us by Bradford and Brewster and Winslow and their humbler companions. We were destined to be a nation of pioneers, breaking fresh ground and subduing the wilderness, first in the Atlantic coastland, then in the uplands of the Alleghenies, then in the boundless West. Each community passing through the pioneer stage, usually to ultimate prosperity, there was always danger that it should succumb to the faults of the pioneer and of the prosperous, the rough and reckless individualism of the former, the selfish materialism of the latter, the conviction of both that property is the main good of life, the rights of property the most sacred interests of the race. No one can measure the extent to which our communities have been saved from such grossness by those of their number who at their founding and throughout their rank development have remembered the story of the Pilgrim Fathers.

“ 'Tis not the grapes of Canaan that repay,  
But the high faith that failed not by the way.”

We have the clusters of Eshcol in prodigious abun-

dance; can we not preserve also the high faith of the Pilgrims—their faith in the order of the world, their faith in the future, their faith in popular government even when it is administered by a party which is not our own, or by persons whom we ourselves would not have chosen?

Multitudes of writers have attempted to set forth the quality of the Pilgrim story and the Pilgrim character, but after all none has ever set forth that spirit so well as the one who did it first, the admirable governor of the colony, William Bradford. There is a famous passage in his *History of Plymouth Plantation* that we may well take as exhibiting to us briefly the whole spirit of the Plymouth experiment.

“But hear [here],” he says, “I cannot but stay and make a pause, and stand half amazed at this poore peoples presente condition; and so I thinke will the reader too, when he well considers the same. Being thus passed the vast ocean, and a sea of troubles before in their preparation (as may be remembred by that which wente before), they had now no freinds to wellcome them, nor inns to entertaine or refresh their weatherbeaten bodys, no houses or much less townes to repaire too, to seeke for succoure. It is recorded in scripture as a mercie to the apostle and his shipwreaked company, that the barbarians shewed them no smale kindness in refreshing them, but these savage barbarians, when they mette with them (as after will appeare) were readier to fill their sids full of arrows than otherwise. And for

the season it was winter, and they that know the winters of that cuntrie know them to be sharp and violent, and subjecte to cruell and feirce stormes, deangerous to travill to known places, much more to serch an unknown coast. Besides, what could they see but a hidious and desolate willdernes, full of wild beasts and willd men? and what multitudes ther might be of them they knew not. Nether could they, as it were, goe up to the tope of Pisgah, to vew from this willdernes a more goodly cuntrie, to feed their hopes; for which way soever they turned their eyes (save upward to the heavens) they could have litle solace or content in respecte of any onward objects. . . Let it also be considred what weake hopes of supply and succoure they left behinde them, that might bear up their minds in this sad condition and trialls they were under; and they could not but be very smale. . . . What could now sustaine them but the spirite of God and his grace? May not and ought not the children of these fathers rightly say: Our faithers were Englishmen which came over this great ocean, and were ready to perish in this willdernes; but they cried unto the Lord, and he heard their voyce, and looked on their adversitie, etc. Let them therfore praise the Lord, because he is good, and his mercies endure forever. Yea, let them which have been redeemed of the Lord, shew how he hath delivered them from the hand of the oppressour. When they wandered in the deserte willderness out of the way, and found no citie to

dwelt in, both hungrie, and thirstie, their sowle was overwhelmed in them. Let them confess before the Lord his loving kindnes, and his wonderfull works before the sons of men."

I wish that students in Brown University would make themselves more familiar with the pages of Bradford. I should think it a wholly sufficient result of such an address as this if I could persuade many of them to read at least the first third of his book. In the first place, it is in its way a classic, with a frequent beauty of phrase that springs from the beauty of his spirit, and from his familiarity with what was to him the one great book, though he had read many others. In the second place, the reading of Bradford's history could not fail to correct in their minds that conception of the Pilgrim and the Puritan which so easily comes to us from the newspapers and from still more ignorant writings, in which what was harsh and narrow in the spirit of Puritan and Separatist is so emphasized, so exclusively brought into the foreground, that the result is but a caricature. I do not think it would be easy for any right-minded young man to rise from the reading of Bradford without the conviction that, whatever in seventeenth-century theology or ethics is now obsolete, here is a man with whom one could strike hands, with whom one could walk side by side, who can typify to us a spirit which, *mutatis mutandis*, we should be glad to apply and to see applied in all the communities and all the affairs of



this great country, that we may advance into the future with a firm hold on what is best in the past.

Men and women of Providence, the history of the Hebrew nation was sacred history only because the Hebrew thought it so. Are we not as truly a chosen people? I wish that we might impose upon our minds the habit of thinking always of our own wonderful history as a sacred story. I wish that, when we read in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews that magnificent bed-roll of the great ones of Israel, we should translate it into terms of our own history—should remind ourselves that by faith our elders obtained a good report; that by faith Bradford and Brewster, when they were called to go out into a place which they should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and they went out, not knowing whither they went. By faith they sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with those who were the heirs with them of the same promise: for they looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Therefore sprang there even of these few so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And

truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned: but they desired a better country, that is, an heavenly; therefore God was not ashamed to be called their God; for He had prepared for them a city. And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Winthrop and of Williams and of Washington and of Franklin and of Adams and of Hamilton and of Lincoln and of Roosevelt, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better things for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.



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